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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

MEMBER

- Community and Economic Development Committee
- Licenses Committee
- Public Works Committee

Youth offender rehabilitation must be our highest priority

Statement of Alderman Jonathan Brostoff December 5, 2022

We need to get smart on crime, especially when it comes to our youth offenders. We have seen a system in Wisconsin – in place now for too many years – that produces extremely poor results. High rates of recidivism, low rates of deterrence, and all at a very high cost to society, both fiscally and morally.

With discussions heating up about the proposed state juvenile justice facility planned for Milwaukee's far northwest side, we must take a moment to consider how, as a society, we treat young offenders who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

It goes without saying that we should do everything we can to successfully treat those youth in the system who have mental health issues, but far too often we fail them. The State of Wisconsin, Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee must step up and ensure that offenders with mental health issues receive the services and care they need. This will make us a safer, more compassionate society and it will also save valuable resources that can be better used elsewhere.

It is my strong belief, without any hesitation or reservation, that rehabilitation must be our number one priority when it comes to youth offenders and how we approach juvenile justice. The vast majority of our youth offenders are not charged with violent crimes; they are capable of being rehabilitated and given an opportunity to become productive and positive adults, and we are failing them if we are not giving them that pathway to success.

We must continue to strive for more educational opportunities, activities and positive engagement that can bring forth a successful pathway. This not only benefits the youth in question but also our society as a whole.

We need more emphasis on pro-social engagement and community-based activities that foster positive connections and growth in our youth offender population.

By putting the emphasis on rehabilitation, I believe we will reduce the DOC capacity needed for youth incarceration.

By pursuing true rehabilitation for juvenile offenders, we can bring more compassionate processes of justice to bear on individuals during a vulnerable time in their lives.